

**Governor's Proposed FY23 Budget Adjustments**  
**Appropriations Hearing**  
**HB 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**Department of Housing**  
**Wednesday, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

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Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan, Representative Nolan, Senator Miner, Representative France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for allowing me to offer my testimony today on House Bill 5037 (AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023). I am interested in the important investments through the Department of Housing to support efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut. My name is Barbara Shaw and I work in **Hartford CT and am also a resident of Hartford CT.**

I am a member of the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut where I serve on the Sustainability Work Group sharing my four decades of experience working with CT residents facing housing insecurity and homelessness, the last twenty years of these at Hands On Hartford a 53 year old Parkville based not for profit that works to ensure that all of our neighbors have sufficient, nutritious food, good health and safe, affordable housing. We, alongside many other partners in the state, know that safe, affordable, and permanent housing is the only solution to homelessness. When our state's residents have stable housing, their economic and health outcomes improve, children are more successful in school and expensive institutional care is reduced. During COVID-19, the need for stable housing for all of Connecticut's residents became even more acute.

On behalf of the several thousand housing insecure and homeless folks we serve each year I respectfully request that the committee support the following proposals and expansions from the Governor's budget for the Department of Housing (DOH):

- We support the preservation of DOH's following FY23 allocations:
  - \$2.935 million Homeless Youth line
  - \$85.323 million Housing/Homeless Services line
  - \$637K Municipal Housing/Homeless Services line
  - \$100 million bond authorization for the Affordable Housing FLEX Fund and \$50 million bond authorization for the state Housing Trust Fund
- We support an additional \$2.3 million in DOH's Housing/Homeless Services line to provide critical staff infrastructure support to Coordinated Access Networks (CANs) and 2-1-1. CANs provide streamlined access to the homeless services system at the regional level. 2-1-1 serves as the statewide single point of entry to CANs.
- We support an increase to DOH's Housing/Homeless Services line by at least \$20 million in FY23 to expand the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), including \$2 million to provide rental assistance to 200 scattered-site supportive housing units for highly vulnerable individuals and families.
- And support an additional \$2.5 million in DOH's Housing/Homeless Services line to establish and implement a proven eviction prevention model that leverages Right to Counsel

legal services and couples them with high-quality social work to address vulnerable renter's needs.

All of these services are important to ensuring that every resident of CT can have a safe, affordable place to call home and that folks with disabilities, complex health conditions and a myriad of vulnerabilities have the supportive services to find shelter, housing and care. It should be underscored that this all depends --- depends completely ---- on our hard working front line staff who at Hands On Hartford work face to face every single day around the clock to ensure this important work continue, even during each day of this pandemic. The work simply cannot continue or expand to meet the growing need of our communities without adequately compensated staff. Therefore, we are urging you to:

- Support the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance long term plan to restore at least \$461 million to community nonprofits, which includes housing and homeless service organizations
- Also we ask that you support providing an additional \$13.34 million in FY 23 (\$8.08 million at DOH and \$5.26 million at DMHAS) to provide homeless and housing service organizations funding for adequate wages, benefits, and professional development for front line workers, increasing rent and utility costs, and better access to technology via:
  - \$7.47 million increase in DOH Housing/Homeless Services line
  - \$169K increase in DOH Municipal Housing/Homeless Services line
  - \$436K increase in DOH Homeless Youth line

Additionally, we strongly support the governor's proposed allocation of \$50 million in American Rescue Plan recovery funds to support the creation of 350 additional housing units affordable to households with incomes between 30% and 50% of area median income.

**The need is dire and the solution is based on a simple notion: Homelessness is solvable.** Connecticut can make homelessness a rare, brief, and one-time experience by investing in what works: housing, supportive services, and importantly in the people and infrastructure that support our most vulnerable residents.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony, and for your hard work making important and life-saving decisions as we look to shape Connecticut's future beyond the pandemic-- it is with your support that we can help make sure Connecticut's residents are healthy and stably housed and the people on the front lines are adequately compensated for this often hard but vital work.

With warm regards,

*Barbara*

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